

UNCOVERING PERSONAL BARRIERS TO CHANGE

1. Name a goal that is very important for you to accomplish.

Think about what bothers you most about yourself (e.g. maybe you don't say "no" enough; or you don't tell people when you disagree on important matters; or you give yourself a hard time too often); or think about your wishes for yourself (e.g. maybe you wish you could delegate more frequently; or you long to share your real feelings and thoughts with more people; or you wish you could take things less personally). Now turn that *bother* or *wish* into a specific goal. Example: *"I want to say 'no' more often and do more of what's on my own list"; "I want to be a better delegator and be less stressed."* Enter your response into column #1.

2. Acknowledge your part in the problem.

List all that you do and don't do that *undermines* your progress on your goal. Be as honest and precise as possible (not to beat up on yourself, but because these behaviors will help you to see your immunity to change in the next step). Example: *My goal is to be more straightforward in telling people what I really think. What do I do that works against that? I sugarcoat my words; I withhold what I really think; I say something once and if the person doesn't respond, I let it go.* Enter your answer into column #2.

3. Discover your competing commitments.

3a. Fill in your Worry Box: Ask yourself, "What fears come up when I imagine doing the opposite of all that I wrote in column 2?" Example: *When I imagine saying things directly, I worry that I'll say the wrong thing, and that people will think I don't know what I'm talking about, that I'm uninformed, maybe even dumb.* (Another person might worry that he will make people uncomfortable, that they won't like him, or that people will, in turn, be more frank with her, and she's not sure she wants to hear that.) Enter your answer into the small box labeled Worry Box in column #3.

3b. See the "brakes" you apply to your own goal: The Competing Commitments. Consider that you are not only worrying (a relatively passive activity) about these things, but that you are actively committed (not necessarily consciously) to *making sure the things you worry about never occur*. In the space below the Worry Box, reframe each fear you named into a statement that expresses an active commitment to keeping your fear from happening. Example: *"I worry I'll say the wrong thing, and that people will think I'm dumb"* becomes: *"I am committed to being seen by others as smart, or easygoing, or likeable."* (Or *"I worry that my being more straightforward will lead people to be too critical in return"* becomes this: *"I am committed to people withholding the negative feedback they have for me."*) Enter each restated worry into column #3 under the Worry Box.

4. Consider your immunity to change.

Look across these three columns. You should see now why you are not making the progress you want, and it is not because of the reasons you have probably thought. A part of you wants to accomplish an important goal and another part of you is expending just as much energy working against that goal — but for a very good reason: You are trying to protect yourself from what feels like disaster, just the work of any "immune system."

Source: Robert Kegan.

1. MY IMPROVEMENT GOAL	2. THINGS I DO (OR FAIL TO DO) THAT WORK AGAINST MY IMPROVEMENT GOAL	3. MY COMPETING COMMITMENTS
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